woods. While Mikhail was hobbling the horse and building a campfire, I put up the tent. After a solid meal of canned ham and peas, we sat at the fire.

In the morning Mikhail aroused me. His voice was anxious. "Bad news, Wladimir. The horse is gone!"

We rushed after the fugitive. Tracks led from the clearing to the river. The horse had been jumping, with its forelegs hobbled. The tracks disappeared on the pebbles, but it seemed unlikely that the horse would have jumped into the stream at this point. Which way could it have gone? Mikhail ran to the right down the stream, and I to the left. Soon pebbles gave way to smooth sand. There were no hoof marks. Obviously our Rosinante had taken the other direction. I heard a distant pistol shot. Thinking Mikhail was signaling that he had found the horse, I headed back toward our camp. Then came two shots, one after another—a signal of alarm. I began to run, lost my way, and had to retrace my steps. Finally I saw Mikhail clumping heavily along the river.

He had found the horse—more exactly, its body—on a shoal in the middle of the stream. His first thought was that it might be alive and he ran toward the shoal, but the current swept him off his feet and carried him toward a tree trunk lying across the river. He seized a branch but could not find a foothold. Then he drew his pistol and fired to attract my attention. When I did not answer, he began to inch along the branch. Then he fired twice, and again there was no response. So he continued to pull himself along the branch, trying to extricate his legs from under the tree. Finally he found a kneehold and crawled on the trunk.

We went to the place where the dead horse lay. All we could salvage was the rope. Back at our camp we breakfasted in silence. Then Mikhail began to check the provisions while I studied the map. The situation looked gloomy. We were about as far from Nelkan as from Ayan, but the trip ahead might prove more difficult than the way back. Furthermore, we could not carry our tent and other equipment and provisions. We seemed to have no choice but to abandon everything except food and weapons and head back toward Nelkan.

I did not want to give up. I went to the river. The map failed to show the course of the Chelyasin below the point where we had crossed it, but obviously it belonged to the basin of the Maya. It made no difference whether it discharged into the Aimcha or directly into the Maya. In either case it would carry us to Nelkan. I asked Mikhail, "Can't we build a raft?"

"Surely we can," he replied. "But you cannot ride a raft on a

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN